Commissioner Paris proclaims "Alvin Todd, The Dahlia Man, Day" in Union County

A field scene of Dahlias at Todd's Farm in Suches, circa 1966.

Family members of Alvin D. Todd, aka The Dahlia Man of Suches, gathered at the Historic Union County Courthouse on Monday, Aug. 6, to honor his life and legacy.

Todd passed away 30 years ago, in 1988, but his legacy continues in local legend and through the many unique varieties of Dahlias he propagated over the years.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris joined members of the Todd and Gooch families (Alvin's wife was Zura Gooch Todd) on Aug. 6 to mark the occasion and remember Todd in stories and a proclamation.

The proclamation reads as follows:

"Alvin Todd moved to the small community of Suches in Union County, Georgia, in 1925, where he met Zura Gooch, and they were married after only 12 weeks of courting.

"Alvin and Zura were not only husband and wife, but parents, grandparents, coworkers, business partners and community leaders for more than 62 years.

"In 1928, Alvin's mother-in-law, Julie Gooch, gave him 100 Dahlia bulbs from her yard that she had grown herself, and Alvin proved just how much of a green thumb he had.

"Through trial and error in dividing the bulbs, soil fertilization, planting, digging and storing, Alvin began growing some of the most fantastic Dahlias anyone had yet to lay their eyes on.

"Each Dahlia was unique, and all new colors he created he also gave their own special name that he felt suited that particular flower, such as Red Riding Hood, Blue Mist, Poinsettia or Dahlonega Nugget.

"By 1929, Alvin started marketing and selling the bulbs by mail order, with Zura handling the business aspects and the shipping, and by 1970, he was planting 65,000 bulbs every year.

"The Dahlia Farm in Suches was visited by thousands of people over 40 years so they could see all the brilliant colors in the fields that Alvin worked, and the bulbs were shipped to customers in Canada, Holland, Germany and England.

"Not only did Alvin and Zura raise their children and provide for their family through the sale of Dahlias, but they also raised cattle, chicken, and grew corn and a variety of other vegetables to sell in larger towns at the market.

"Alvin was also involved in his community of Suches by being a Deacon of the Baptist Church, a Justice of the Peace, and the Polling Officer in the Gaddistown District, all of which he served for 40 years.

"Alvin Todd has made lasting contributions to Suches and Union County through his hard work and his lasting legacy of growing some of the most beautiful Dahlias, rightfully earning him the name 'The Dahlia Man.'

"Therefore, I, Lamar Paris, Commissioner of Union County, Georgia, hereby proclaim Aug. 6, 2018, as 'Alvin Todd Day' in Union County.

"And on the 30-year anniversary of his passing, I would like to express the gratitude and admiration of the people of Union County for his lasting contributions of beauty through his Dahlias, hard work and public service to our community."

Union County Historical Society President Libby Stevens also attended the reading of the proclamation, and on behalf of the Historical Society, she accepted the presentations of both the Todd Family and Gooch Family History Books.

Afterward, everyone gathered outdoors on the courthouse walkway for a Memorial Brick Ceremony followed by a ringing of the bell in memory of Mr. Todd.

Alvin D. Todd shown with some beautiful dahlias grown on his farm.

Members of the Todd and Gooch Families who gathered for the Aug. 6, 2018, proclamation of "Alvin Todd Day" at the Historic Union County Courthouse.